

Remarks

In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, reconsideration of the outstanding office action is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 18-23, and 43 have been cancelled without prejudice. Claims 2-5, 10, 13, 16, 17, 24, 32, 39, 42, and 44-46 have been amended. Specifically, claim 10 has been re-written in independent form (reciting the limitations of prior independent claim 1) and all other amended claims have been amended with respect to their dependency (now depending ultimately from claim 10). Claims 2-13, 15-17, 24-42, and 44-47 remain pending.

On page 3 of the outstanding office action, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (“PTO”) acknowledged that claim 10, if re-written in independent form, would be allowable. Given the above amendments (all pending claims ultimately depend from claim 10), all pending claims should be allowable. Thus, the objection to claim 10 should be withdrawn.

The rejection of claims 1-9, 11-23, and 43-47 under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(a), 103(a) as anticipated by or obvious over PCT Application WO 00/03723 to Melrose et al. (“Melrose”) is rendered moot in view of the above amendments. Because all remaining rejected claims now depend from claim 10, which the PTO indicated would be allowable over Melrose, the rejection should be withdrawn.

The rejection of claims 24-42 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) for obviousness over Melrose is rendered moot by the above amendments. Because all remaining rejected claims now depend from claim 10, which the PTO indicated would be allowable over Melrose, the rejection should be withdrawn.

In view of all of the foregoing, applicants submit that this case is in condition for allowance and such allowance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: January 25, 2006



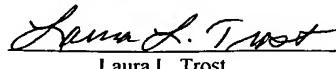
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